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ON THE "MOURNING ATHENA" RELIEF

ON the great Eleusinian relief at Athens the very different style of the two female figures has been explained by the assumption that the artist copied types already familiar in statues of these goddesses. The recurrence of the same figures in different groupings elsewhere lends credence to this view, and furnishes important data for naming them as they appear on the relief from Eleusis.¹ The same principle, I believe, will throw some light on the fascinating relief in the Acropolis Museum which goes by the name of the "Mourning Athena"² (Fig. 1).

The conclusions of Graef,³ who has made a careful study of this relief and its position in the history of Greek art, readily command assent. Even apart from the disproportionate development of the lower part of the face, which Graef emphasizes as the marked characteristic of Peloponnesian art, it is evident that there is some connection between this relief and, *e.g.*, the sculptures of the temple of Zeus at Olympia. The lines of the profile and the treatment of hair and eye recall the heads of the Olympia pediments; the folds of the garment are like those in the garment of Sterope, and the position of the arms like the arms of Oenomaus; while in the treatment of the breast, the muscles of the left upper arm, and the garment about the left arm, this Athena closely resembles the Athena (or nymph) of the Atlas metope. The main interest of this Athena, however, lies first in the charm which attends the simple, delicate model-

¹ Roscher, *Lexikon*, II, 1349 f.

² *Δελτιον*, 1888, p. 103, 123.

³ *Ath. Mitth.* XV, pp. 22 f.

ling of the face and neck, and secondly in the mystery which still veils the meaning of the action here depicted.

That the figure is adapted from a statue seems to me probable from certain inconsistencies in its treatment. In particular the folds of the drapery below the girdle are not perpendicular, but the line of their fall corresponds exactly to the inclination of the whole figure; *i.e.* the maker of the relief worked from an erect figure, the inclination of which he changed in a somewhat mechanical way. Moreover, the folds of the garment are not disturbed by the bending of the left knee, and the only deviation from the perpendicular *schema* is the slight lifting of the lower line of the garment. From these facts we should infer that the artist was working from a figure somewhat like the Vesta Giustiniani, a statue erect, standing squarely on both feet, the spear probably erect and a little out from the body, while the right hand rests on the hip, as, *e.g.*, in the Olympia Oenomaus. The inclination of the head might be original, or it might be part of the adaptation to the relief.¹

Such an Athena statue has been modified to represent an Athena at rest, and bending her head down toward a pillar. It is the received opinion that this "pillar" represents an inscribed stele;² and perhaps this opinion receives additional support from a lekythos in the National Museum at Athens,³ on which we see Athena standing beside a wide stele of the type ordinarily used for inscriptions. On the other hand it should be noted that a high slender pillar of this type is almost never used for inscriptions; Graef cites a single instance, and it would be difficult to find others. Perhaps it is unreasonable to urge that Athena is not in a position where she could read an inscription if it were there, yet the point does make this theory less satisfactory. M. Lechat⁴ rejects this theory

¹ The facts pointed out in this paragraph would lead me to reject the suggestion of M. Lechat, in the article referred to below, that the maker of this relief drew his inspiration from some well-known painting rather than from a statue.

² A list of dead Athenians, *Jour. Hell. Stud.* X, 267; Athenian treasury accounts, *Ath. Mitth.* XV, 24 f.

³ Exhibition number 1061.

⁴ *Monuments et mémoires* (Fondation E. Piot), III, 5 f.

entirely, and makes the interesting suggestion that Athena is looking down at the figure of Erichthonius represented on top of this column. One will readily grant that such a small figure might have been painted rather than carved, as was probably the case with some other details on this very relief. If Erich-



FIGURE 1.—THE "MOURNING ATHENA."

thonius the *child* were depicted, the result would not be unlike the Athena and child on a vase in Paris (Salle L, no. 63; Benndorf, *G.S.V.* pl. xxxi, 1). M. Lechat, however, rejects this hypothesis, and propounds the theory that Erichthonius is represented as a *serpent* issuing from a *cista*, which *cista* would serve as a capital for the column. The weak point in M. Lechat's argument is that he can produce no analogy for a column without some sort of a capital on which the *cista* might rest, nor is it really conceivable that a col-

umn without a capital would be used for this purpose. A round basket does not in any sense serve as a capital for a square pillar. If this pillar were a column supporting a votive figure (the figure of a child, or a *cista* with serpent), it would almost certainly have had an abacus block in relief on which the figure would rest. It may be added that there is no reason why Erichthonius in either form should be represented on a *pillar* before

Athena. — It has already been pointed out by Graef that the god with bowed head which often appears on Greek reliefs is a god who looks down graciously on his worshippers.¹ I see no reason for adopting a different explanation in this instance. As for the pillar, it should be noted that this type of pillar on vases ordinarily denotes the *meta* or goal-post of the race-course.² Certainly it is simpler not to treat this pillar as an inscribed stele or as a column with figure added in paint, both of which explanations make large demands on the imagination, but to treat it as the symbol of the palaestra. In that case Athena is looking down, not indeed at the post, but at the worshippers who are wont to exercise in its vicinity. That the goddess of the Academy and of the Panathenaea should be thought of as presiding over the palaestra, is at Athens not at all unnatural.

The theory that the Athena on this relief is adapted from a statue receives some slight support from another lekythos in



FIGURE 2. — LEKYTHOS IN THE NATIONAL MUSEUM AT ATHENS.

¹ Graef cites the Heracles on a relief published by Schoene, *Griech. Reliefs*, xxvii, no. 112.

² *E.g.* Munich *Cat.*, Jahn 199; British Museum *Cat.* III, E 389, cf. E 631; Gerhard, *Aus. Vas.* 131 (chariot race); Roulez, *Vases peints de Leyde*, pl. xvii, 2.

the National Museum at Athens¹ (Fig. 2). This vase is one of the numerous lekythoi with white slip which were found in Euboea in the later part of the decade between 1880 and 1890. It belongs with a series of lekythoi with hard brownish-yellow slip on which the scene is drawn in thin yellow glaze; dull color (or black) is applied in solid masses for garments, and ordinarily the flesh of women is indicated by the use of white enamel paint. On the earlier members of the series the shoulder is left red, as on the present vase, and three (or five) palmettes with scrolls ornament the shoulder. Probably all these lekythoi were made about the same time, and that not far from the middle of the fifth century B.C. The peculiarity of the present vase is that the flesh of Athena is painted a dull pink, instead of the usual white, as the foundation on which the details are added in glaze. The only other instance of pink used in this way on lekythoi of this period, so far as I am aware, is on a lekythos in the Louvre,² which is probably from the same hand.

The Athena on the lekythos at Athens at once recalls the Athena of the well-known relief. The attitude is very much the same, except that the legs and feet are drawn after a lekythos type,³ and the spear is held erect, out from the body.

¹ Athens, Nat. Mus. 1968 (960). Height, 0.293 m.; circumference, 0.305 m. The red of the clay is slightly darkened by a glaze. On the red shoulder are three palmettes with nine leaves each. Slip thin and smooth, greenish yellow. The complicated maeander is interrupted by horizontal crosses. Flesh pink, garment light red. Preliminary sketch in the soft surface with a dull point.

Athena stands *en face*, head bowed to the right, before an unfluted column. Her right hand rests on the hip, and her left hand is extended holding a spear erect. She wears a sleeveless peplos with free overfold, and snake aegis of the collar type; the hair falls free behind, and is held by a wide red taenia about the head. The ear is reversed, the left shoulder does not connect with the neck, and at other points the drawing is rude.

I am indebted to M. Tsountas, ephor of antiquities at Athens, for the following statement in regard to this vase: "The exact date of its discovery is not known, and the only fact obtainable is that it came from a grave on the estate of one Nostraki, who dug by the permission of the authorities."

² Louvre, CA 9: Ephebos wearing chlamys, petasos, etc., stands to left holding a spear in right hand. Behind him is a fluted column.

³ *E.g.* the youth on the lekythos at Athens (3525) 1825, published by Weiss-häupl in *Ath. Mitth.* XV, Taf. i. This type, however, is not common in the class of lekythoi on which white is used for the flesh of women.

The garment also and the hair are unlike those on the relief, but these again reproduce types with which the vase painter was familiar. In a word, with the exception of the position of the spear the difference between vase and relief are just what one would expect when the vase painter drew his inspiration from a statue or relief.

If the lekythos be accepted as genuine, and I find no sufficient reason to doubt its genuineness, we must raise the question as to its relation to the "Mourning Athena" relief. It is scarcely possible that the vase painter worked with this particular relief before him. Apart from the fact that a vase painter would be most unlikely to reproduce a then insignificant relief, we have no assurance that the relief is older than the vase; in fact, the presumption is, it seems to me, that the vase is older. The somewhat archaic character of the relief is best explained on the supposition that the statue which suggested it belonged to the period when Peloponnesian art was exerting an important influence on Athenian sculptors; while the statue, then, would be earlier than the middle of the fifth century, there is reason to think that the relief belongs to the second half of the century. Furthermore, it is not easy to account for the adaptation of the relief figure so that we should get from it the Athena on this vase. Granted that the vase is not directly dependent on the relief, we must assume that in so far as the vase and the relief have any connection with each other, it is due to antecedents of both. If the relief is based on a statue of Athena of a date not far from the middle of the fifth century B.C., probably the vase was inspired by the same statue.¹

Even if admitted as evidence, the lekythos contributes very little to our positive knowledge of such a statue. The column is a familiar convention of the vase painter to indicate a temple, and suggests that we are dealing with a temple statue. Again, it seems to me very probable that the painter has re-

¹ Loescheke (*Ath. Mitth.* V, p. 381) has pointed out another specimen of ware with white slip on which it is probable that a statue is represented.

produced the correct attitude of the left hand and spear, while the maker of the relief, on the other hand, in giving an inclination to the whole figure has changed the left arm and spear in order to give some support to the figure in this new posture. The most important fact in this connection is that on both relief and vase the head of Athena is bent forward. If vase and relief are witnesses to a statue, it is a statue with the head bent forward, and the posture of the head was not invented by the sculptor of the relief. The main value of the vase, however, is that it does add some slight confirmation to what the relief suggests, in regard to a statue of Athena otherwise unknown to us.

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